

**An Atlas of the
Michigan and United States
Esperanto Communities**

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Abstract

Subscription and membership data from three Esperanto organizations are used to produce a geographic and statistical description of the Esperanto-speaking communities of Michigan and the United States in 1992. A brief history of artificial languages, Esperanto, and the Esperanto movement are provided as the rationale for a structuralist interpretation of this description. A trend toward increasing activity is inferred.

Introduction

In 1987 esperantists celebrated the 100th anniversary of the creation of Esperanto. During that period Esperanto has gone from the imagination of one man to a language spoken across the globe. Few efforts have been made to document the spread of Esperanto, and none in Michigan or the United States. Few baseline data exist to document the earlier periods of expansion and growth. This report represents an effort to establish such a baseline. Future efforts should be able to use this snapshot to begin to make inferences regarding trends.

Within Michigan and the United States, the Esperanto community is still very young. Although previous organizations existed, the Esperanto League for North America (ELNA) was founded in 1952 (Stephens 1991) and the Esperanto Society of Michigan (ESM) in 1983 (ESM 1992). Public histories for these organizations are simply non-existent. The world community has been more well studied. The Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) has served as a central focus of the Esperanto movement since 1908, but few studies have been published in English or made their way into the United States.

Esperanto often attracts idealistic individuals who expend incredible effort to expand the Esperanto community. Many of these individuals become ideologically obsessed with the desire for growth and seek propaganda rather than scholarship in descriptive studies of the movement. This document is an attempt to portray the distribution of the active members of the Esperanto community as accurately as possible and to discover and explain underlying patterns. The small available historical data will be used to identify possible trends.

Each section of this report will contribute to building a descriptive picture of the factors that have influenced the development of the Esperanto community. The current distribution of esperantists is probably best interpreted from a structuralist perspective, a complete treatment of which is beyond the scope of this report. Nevertheless, a brief history the Esperanto movement and its roots is fundamental to any interpretation of the subsequent description.

Artificial Languages and the Origins of Esperanto

Among the human creation myths lie the earliest evidence of human linguistic diversity. In Western mythology, linguistic differences were considered a punishment of the creator. In 1878, a teenager named Ludoviko Lazarus Zamenhof was growing up in Bialystok, then part of Czarist Russia, and dreaming of a common language for everyone. The idea of universal languages was not new: Descartes, among others, had considered the idea. Artificial languages (AL's) were often proposed as a solution to the problem and many people had drawn up outlines and even grammars of proposed universal languages. In fact during this same year Johann Martin Schleyer introduced his created language Volapük. Zamenhof believed that the inter-ethnic violence he saw around him was aided by, if not the result of, language differences. In 1887, Zamenhof published his language scheme anonymously as Dr. Esperanto (Esperanto means 'one who hopes'). Although Volapük had amassed a significant following by this time (Linderfelt 1888), many were discouraged by the difficulty of the language. Esperanto found fertile ground among these disenchanted speakers of Volapük. Rapidly, Esperanto found many vocal, dedicated advocates throughout Europe and small communities of speakers began to organize.

Most artificial languages are never spoken or learned by anyone. Few reach publication and of those published, very few attract more than a handful of speakers (Balkanyi et al, 1979). Artificial languages that survive long enough to attract a sizable body of speakers, are often torn apart by language reformers and revisionists. The Esperanto community survived such a schism in 1907 with the publication of Couturat and DeBeaufront's Ido (Balkanyi 1979). One of the most recent artificial languages Loglan, created in 1954 by Dr. James Cooke Brown, has lost a sizable part of it's community to the language project Lojban. Lojban was begun by a group of speakers in 1988 who were dissatisfied with the direction taken by the creator (LeChevalier 1991) and who subsequently made significant modifications to the basic structure and vocabulary of the language.

Esperanto has also been discouraged by various political groups. Adolph Hitler associated Esperanto with Judaism and mentions it specifically in *Mien Kampf*. During World War II, many esperantists (including almost all of Zamenhof's family) perished in concentration camps. Josef Stalin also discouraged Esperanto activity in the Soviet Union to discourage international communication. Many Soviet esperantists were condemned to labor camps and prison as the result of their activities. Interesting, Joseph McCarthy found Esperanto an un-American activity and during the McCarthy era many esperantists were scrutinized and harassed for receiving magazines and mail from communist countries.

Esperanto's history has left an indelible mark on the distribution of Esperantists today. Other facators, such as political affiliation, economic situation still play important roles in the Esperanto movement today.

Esperanto Today

Esperanto is currently recognized as the only artificial language to outlive its creator with an active, organized community. Efforts have been made to quantify this community and current work seems to place it near 2 million (Hoffman 1991). There are problems with all such efforts in that they are extrapolations based on membership of various organizations. Unfortunately few other data are available on esperantists. The organizations chosen to measure activity are probably the best general measures available. All are committed to centrist principles and are politically neutral.

This document, though based on membership and subscription data, is presented as a cross-section of the Esperanto community: Undoubtedly biased, but firmly grounded in a real, observable segment that can be clearly defined and delimited. It has been organized into three sections each dealing with one of the important Esperanto organizations that are active within the United States.

Michigan

Esperanto Society of Michigan

Michigan's first Esperanto organization the Esperanto Society of Detroit, founded in the 1930's enjoyed a flurry of activity in the early part of the century, but declined and had disbanded by 1964. In 1983 Sharon Lakosky founded the Esperanto Society of Michigan (ESM), first as a local study group, and then as a clearinghouse for Esperanto information within Michigan.

In 1992 217 people subscribed to the ESM newsletter Semanto of which 52 were members of ESM. Esperanto activity, as measured by

subscription to *Semanto* or membership in the ESM, is found in 30 counties in Michigan (Table 1).

Most ESM activity is found in the tri-county region near Detroit, with Wayne county containing the most subscribers (64) and Oakland county the greatest number of members (18). Figure 1 shows the distribution of the subscribers of *Semanto*. Two concentrations are evident: the tri-county area and Kalamazoo county. The location quotient analysis, using 1990 population data (Figure 2) reveals a different pattern that highlights Alcona county (LocQ = 8.4). Figure 3 shows the distribution of ESM members which is similar to the corresponding subscribers map. The location quotient analysis of the membership data, place the areas of highest activity all in northern lower Michigan (Lake, Alcona, and Benzie LocQ > 3.5).

X ₁ : Semanto					
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
7.233	14.869	2.715	221.082	205.56	30
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum Squared:	# Missing:
1	64	63	217	7981	0

X ₁ : Members					
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
1.733	3.619	.661	13.099	208.802	30
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum Squared:	# Missing:
0	18	18	52	470	0

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for subscribers of *Semanto* and members of ESM by county, for counties with ESM activity.

If esperantists were evenly distributed within Michigan, a very high correlation with population would be expected. The correlation between population and *Semanto* subscribership is high (Figure 5), and explains nearly 80% of the variance. The correlation with members is lower (Table 2). Within a group as small as the ESM, the activity of individuals can make

1992 Esperanto Society of Michigan *Semanto* Subscribers

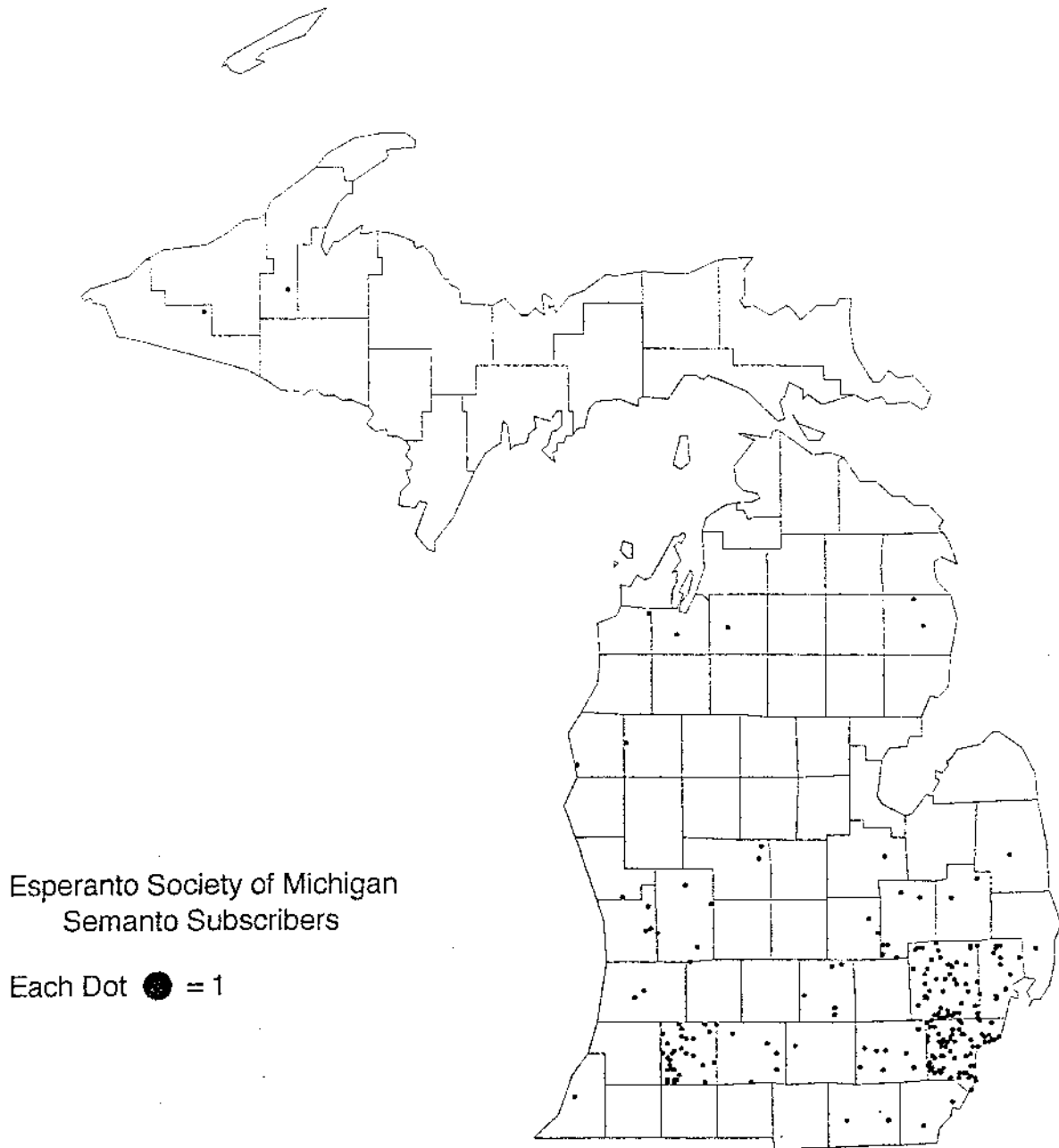


Figure 1. Distribution of 1992 subscribers of the ESM newsletter *Semanto*.

1992 Esperanto Society of Michigan Members

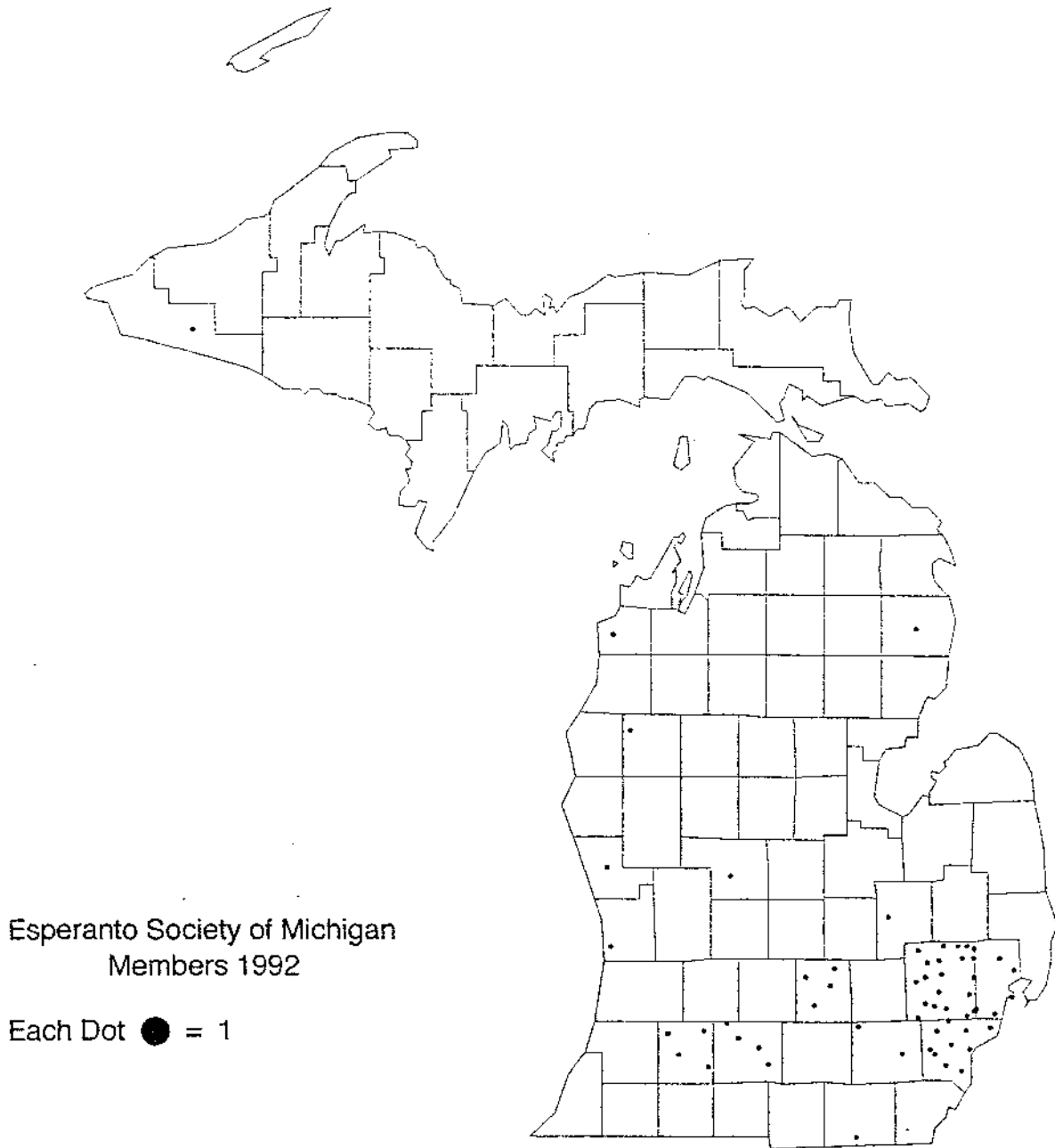


Figure 3. Distribution of 1992 members of ESM.

1992 Esperanto Society of Michigan Location Quotients of Members

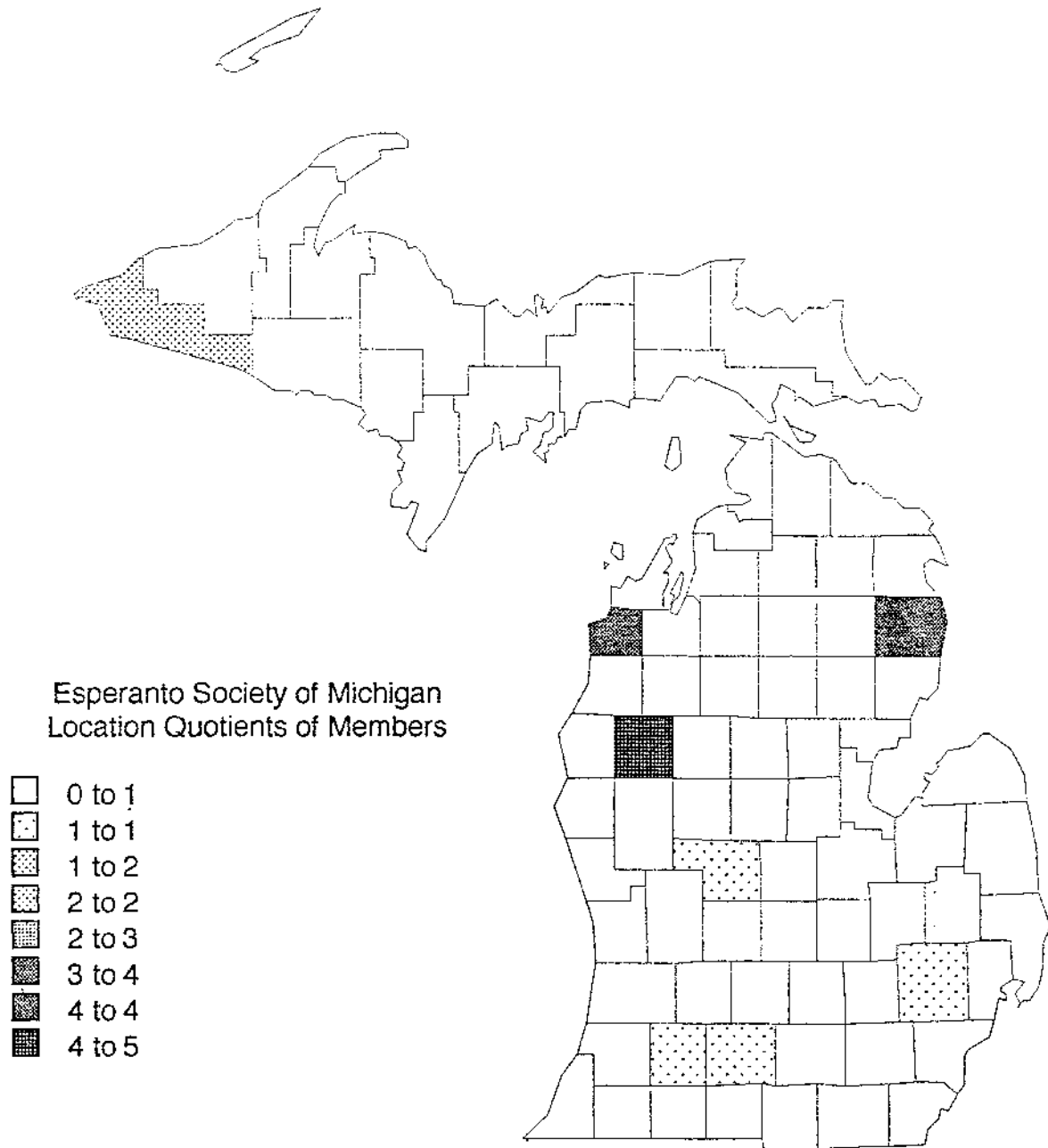


Figure 4. Location quotient analysis of the 1992 members of ESM.

noticeable differences. Some counties, Kalamazoo for example, contain a particularly dedicated individual or group of individuals who devote large amounts of time to attracting other people by conducting classes, holding public meetings, producing flyers, etc. This factor probably accounts for some of the variability in the ESM members and Semanto subscribers data (Table 1).

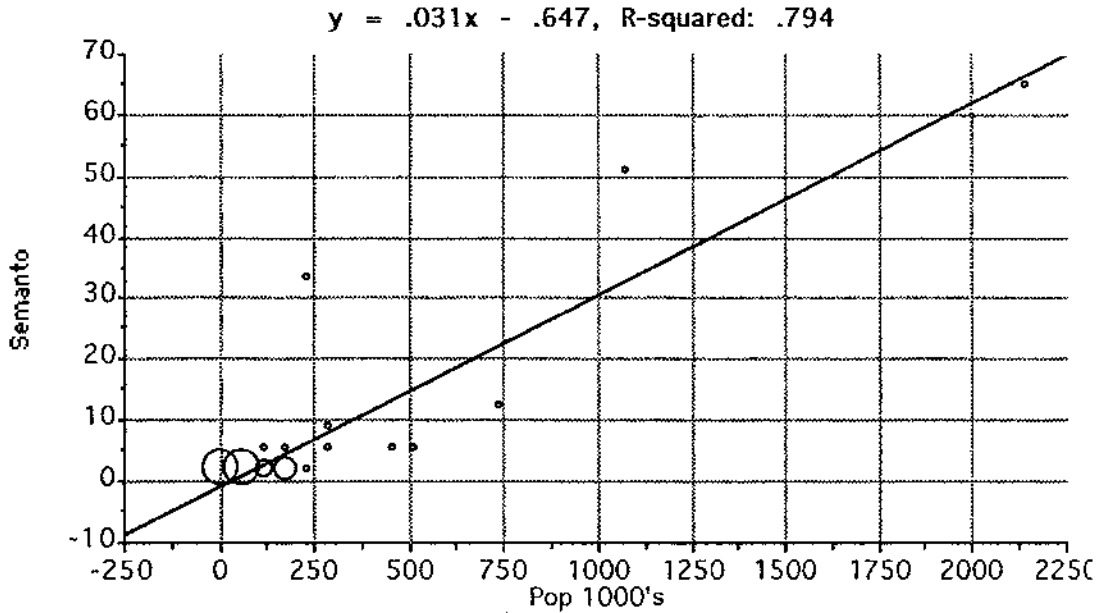


Figure 5. Simple regression of 1990 Michigan population per county and subscribers of Semanto per county. Large points represent overlap of multiple points.

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
30	1109213.375	.727	.528

Table 2. Product moment correlation of Michigan county populations and members of ESM per county.

The product-moment correlation between ESM members and Semanto subscribers is surprisingly low (Table 3). All members are subscribers and correlate perfectly. This comparison, therefore, should be particularly

sensitive to differences between areas that have active members and that have greater interest due mainly to chance or higher population.

Corr. Coeff. X_1 : Members Y_1 : Semanto			
Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
30	46.202	.859	.737

Table 3. Product-moment correlation of members of ESM by county and subscribers of Semanto per county.

United States of America

Esperanto League for North America

The Esperanto League for North America (ELNA) was founded in 1952. At that time, another organization, the Esperanto Association of North America (EANA) was already in existence. Founded in 1908, the leadership of the EANA was strongly influenced by the 1950's McCarthyist anti-communist sentiment and became obsessed with unmasking supposed 'radicals.' Over the course of a small number of years, the EANA succeeded in driving off many in the Esperanto community. The EANA eventually dwindled in numbers and had disappeared by 1972.

ELNA has been growing steadily since it's creation. Currently there are 937 U. S. members with representatives in every state. Figure 6 shows the distribution of ELNA members. ELNA members appear to be concentrated in California and the Northeast. The location quotient analysis (Figure 7) indicates that, when compared with 1990 U. S. population, the most important concentrations are in Alaska, Oregon, and Montana.

If U.S. Esperantists were evenly distributed, there would be a very high correlation between ELNA members and U.S. population. This correlation is high (.89). A regression analyses and graph shows the

1992 Esperanto League for North America Members

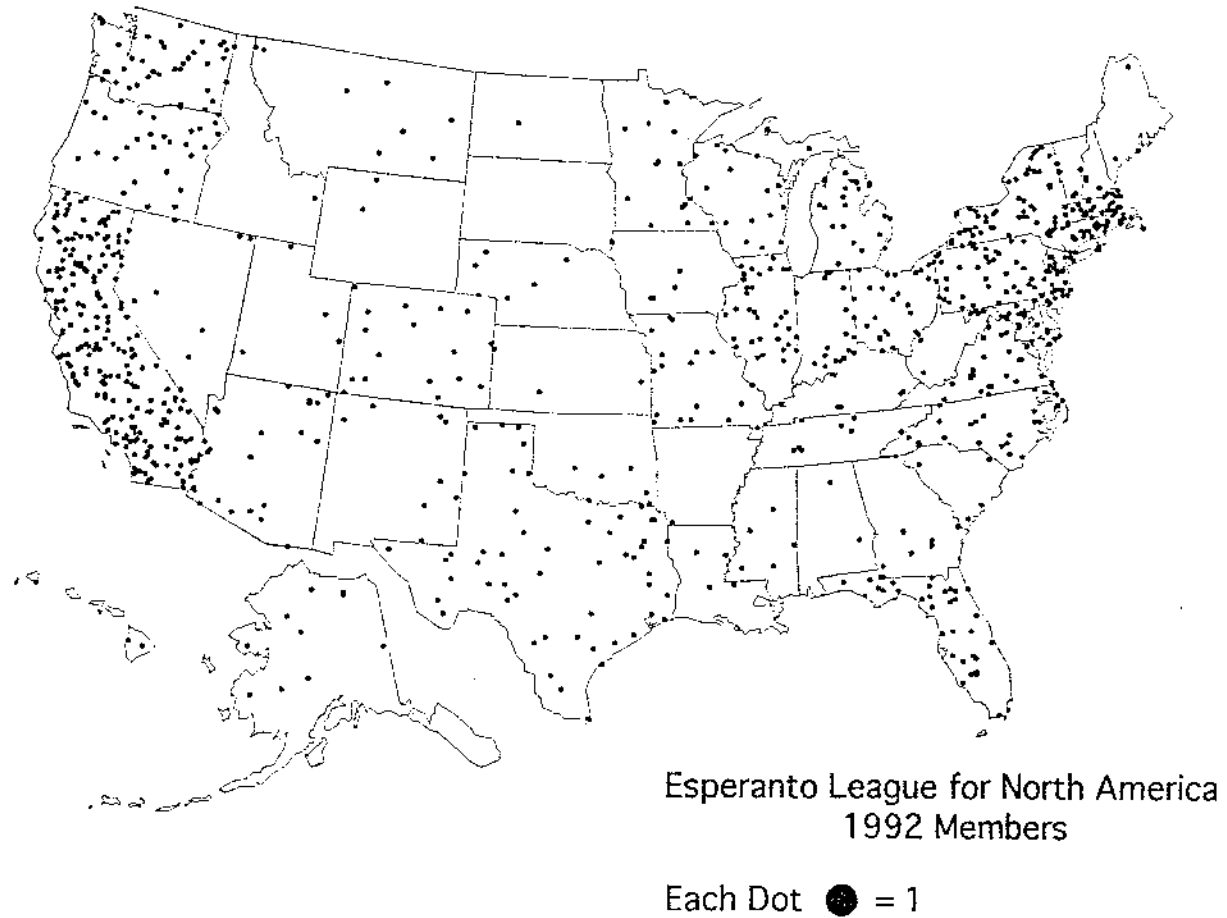


Figure 6. Distribution of the 1992 members of the Esperanto League for North America.

1992 Esperanto League for North America Location Quotients of Members

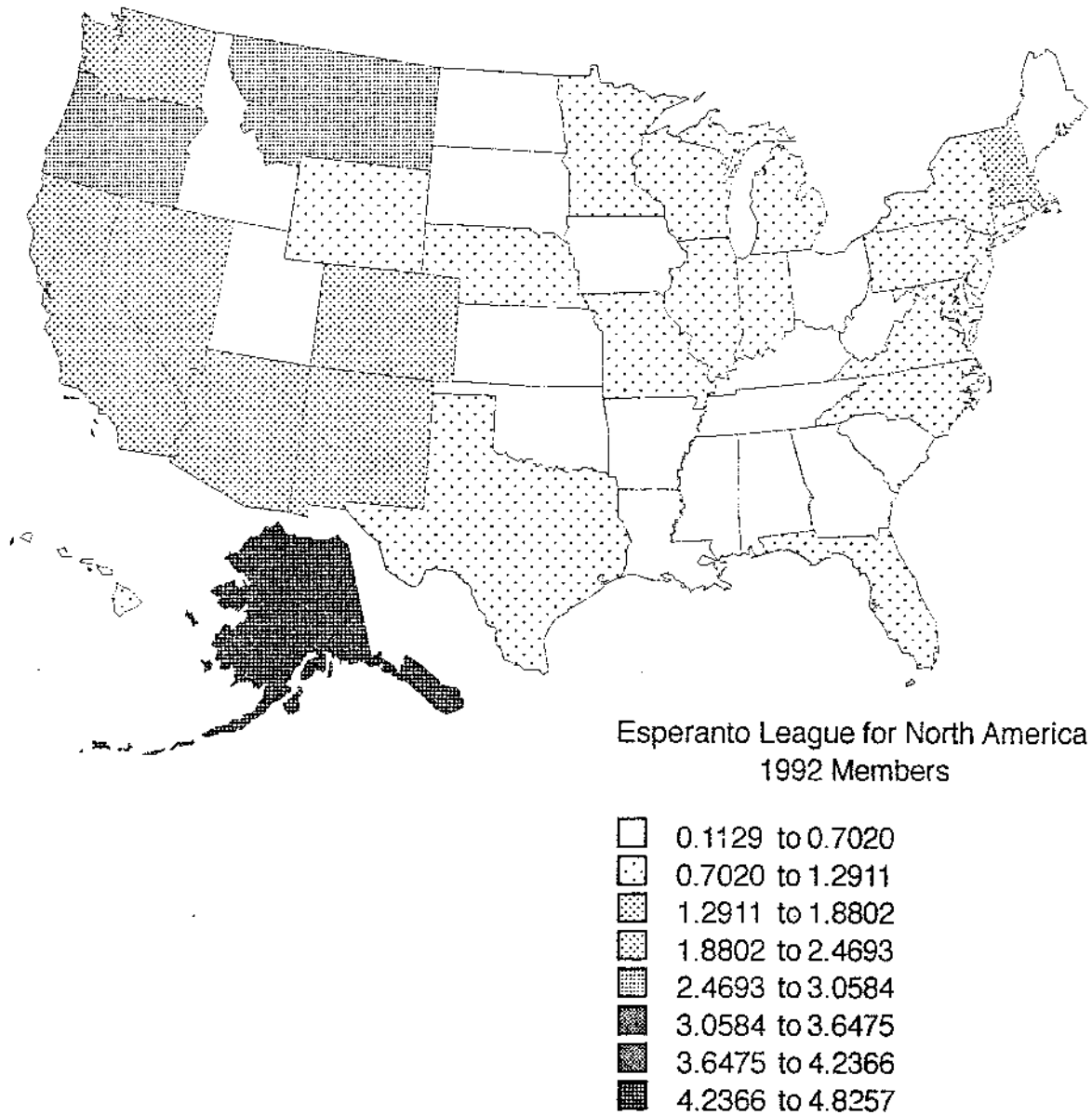


Figure 7. Location quotient analysis of the 1992 members of the Esperanto League for North America.

predicted and observed values (Figure 8). Much of the variability (nearly 80%) observed in between state comparisons (Table 4) is due to underlying population differences between the states.

X1: ELNA Members					
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
17.453	31.426	4.317	987.599	180.063	53
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum Squared:	# Missing:
0	217	217	925	67499	2

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of ELNA membership data for U.S. members by state (missing data represent postal code designations for overseas military addresses).

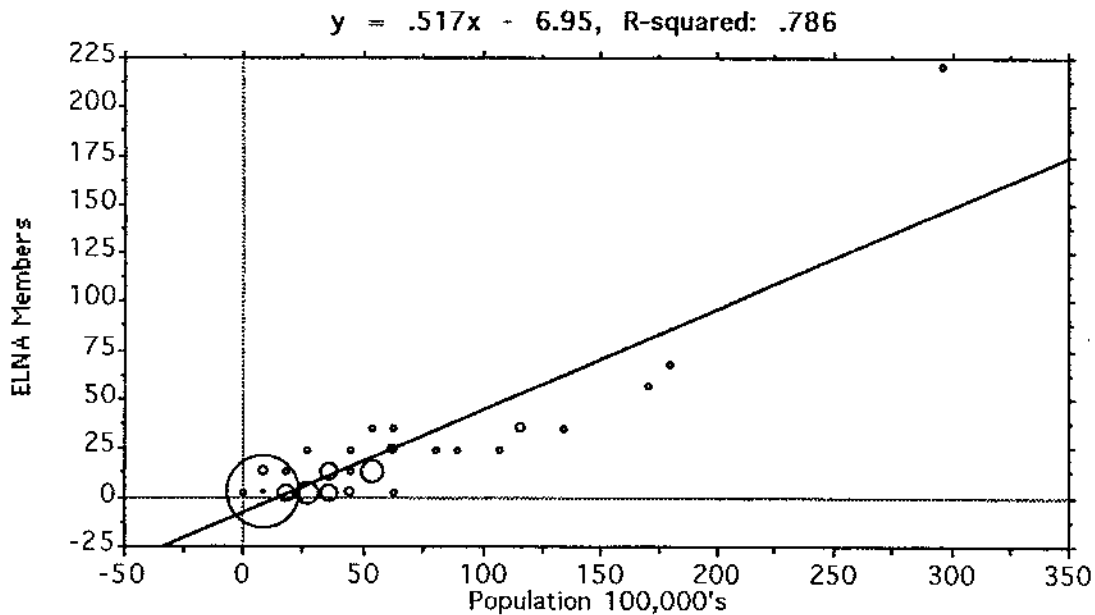


Figure 8. Simple regression between U.S. state populations and members of ELNA per state. Large points represent overlap of multiple points.

Universala Esperanto-Asocio

In 1908, the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) was founded in Switzerland to serve as an international organizing agency for esperantists. UEA is currently the largest and most prestigious of the Esperanto organizations with representatives in 114 countries. In addition to membership (for which 1992 data are currently unavailable), UEA supports a

network of delegates who provide volunteer service to members from other countries. There are currently 129 U.S. delegates in 33 states. Figure 9 shows the distribution of U.S. delegates. The largest concentrations appear to be in California, but a location quotient analysis comparing the number of delegates with 1990 population identifies Alaska followed by Oregon as have the greatest relative populations. Also notable is Delaware.

The distribution of UEA delegates is not as dependent on population as the membership of other Esperanto organizations. The correlation between delegates and population, shown in Table 5 is substantially lower.

Corr. Coeff. X_1 : Population 100,000's Y_1 : UEA Delegates

Count:	Covariance:	Correlation:	R-squared:
51	244.182	.75	.562

Note: 4 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 5. Product-moment correlation between U. S. state populations and members of UEA per state. (Missing values represent postal codes for overseas military addresses, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands for which population data were unavailable).

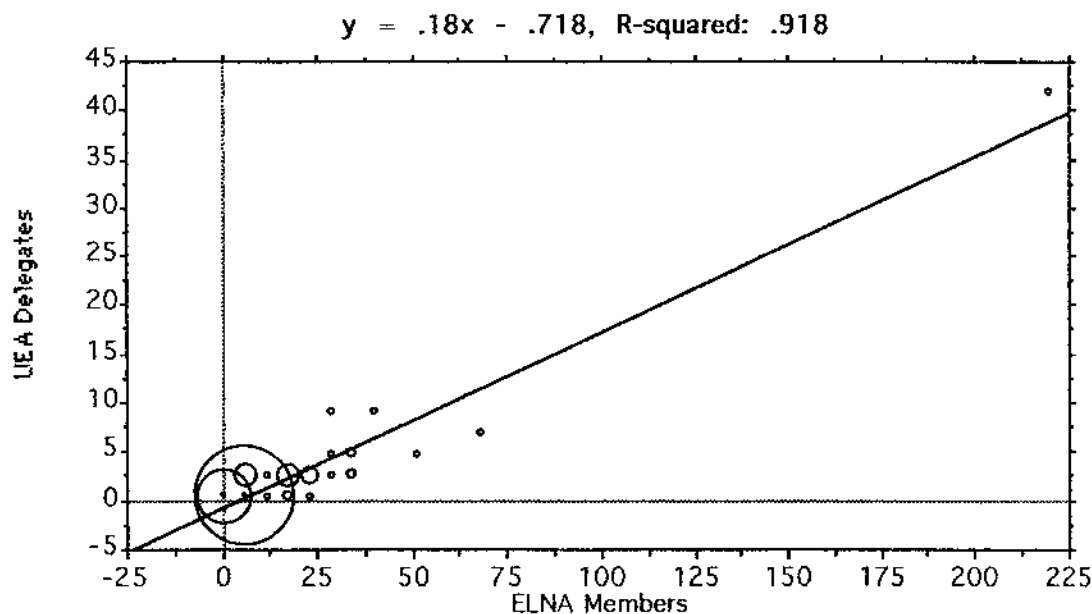


Figure 10. Simple regression of ELNA members per state and UEA members per state. Large points represent multiple, overlapping points.

1992 Universala Esperanto-Asocio Delegates

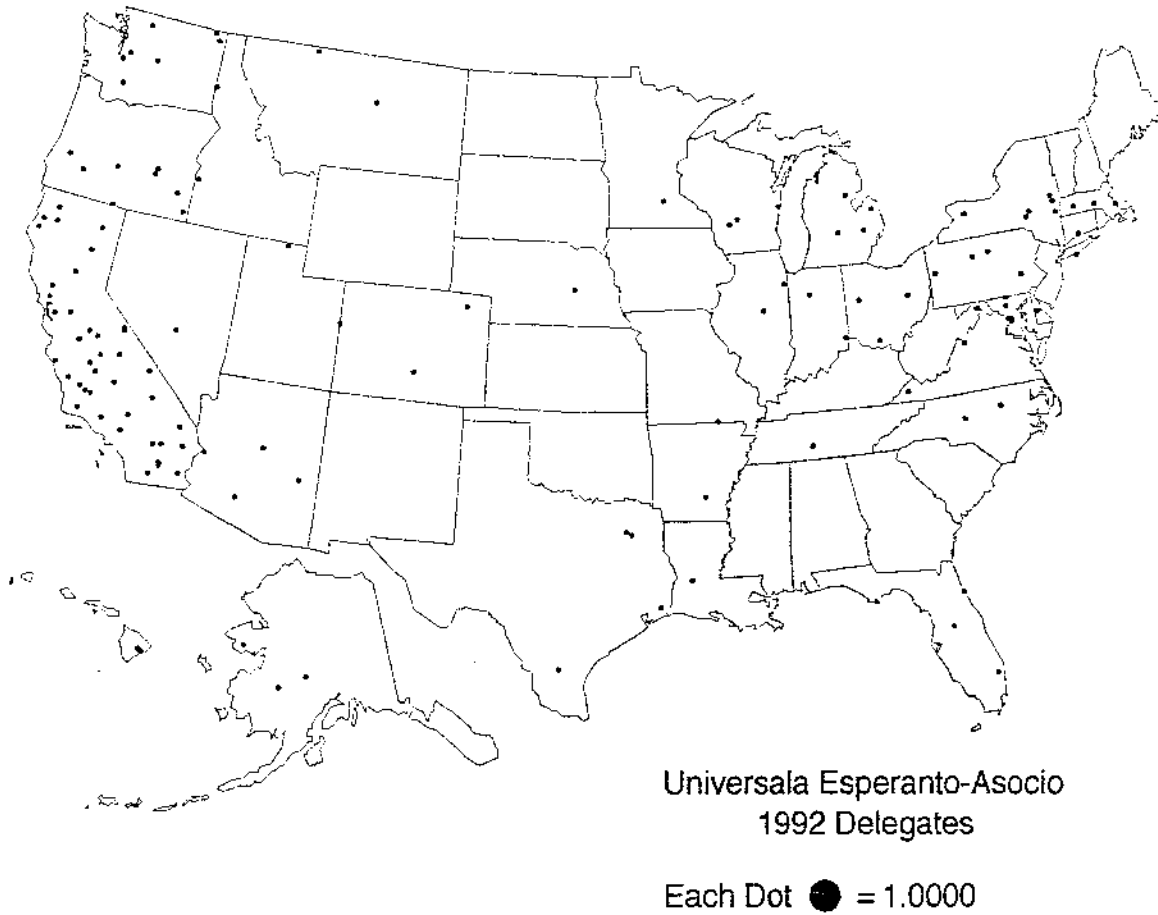


Figure 11. Distribution of 1992 UEA delegates within the United States.

1992 Universala Esperanto-Asocio Location Quotients of Delegates

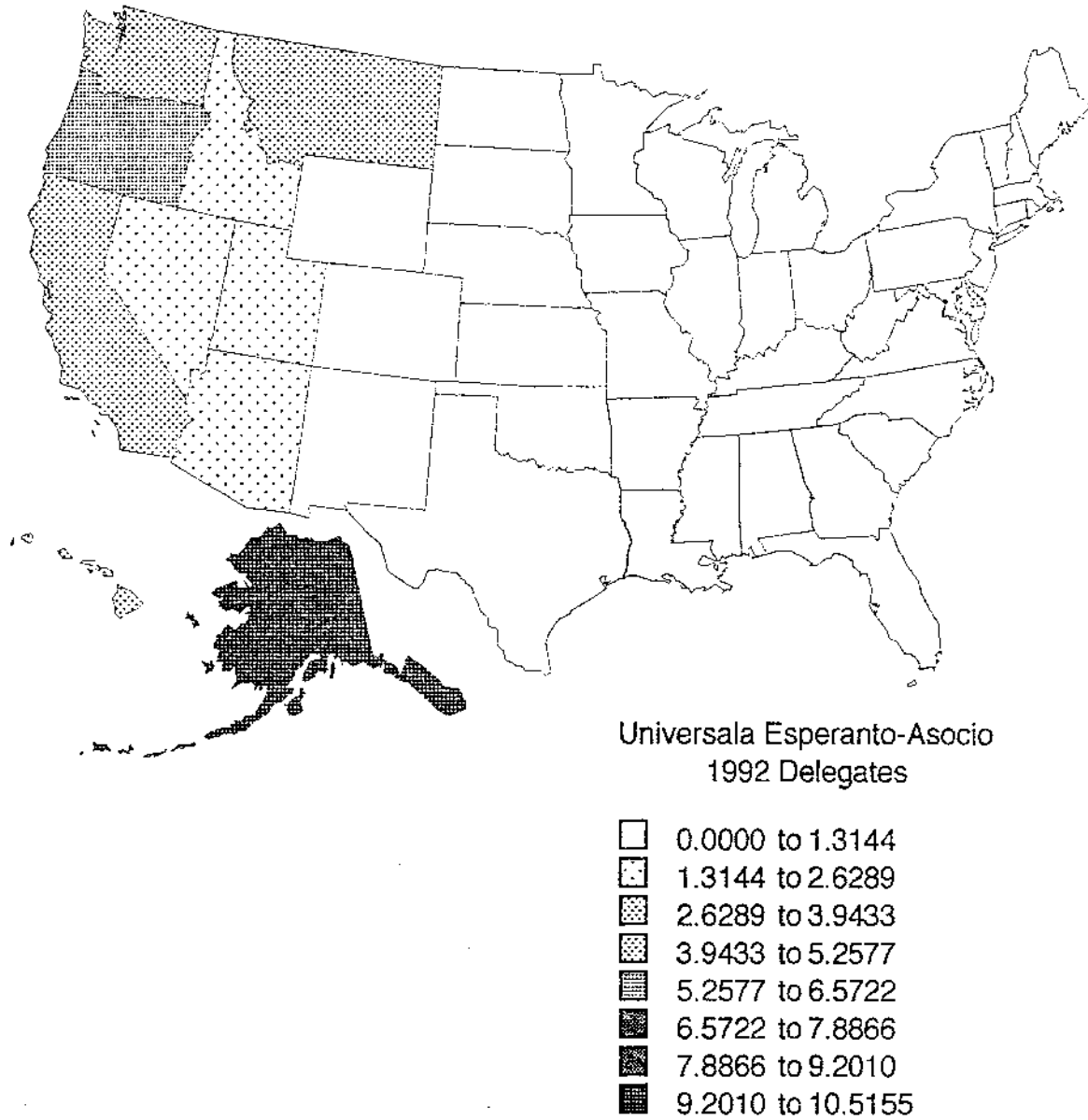


Figure 12. Location quotient analysis of the 1992 UEA delegates.

Surprisingly, the correlation between ELNA members and UEA delegates is extremely high (.96). A regression analysis in Figure 10 shows the relationship between the two variables.

Universalaj Kongresoj

One of the best barometers of interest in Esperanto has been the *Universala Kongreso*. With the exception of 14 years during World Wars I and II, there has been a convention of Esperanto speakers every year since 1905. The *Universala Kongreso* or Universal Congress (UK) usually occurs in August, lasts about a week, and offers the community an opportunity to meet and speak face to face. Participation is extremely variable (Table 6) and appears to be influenced by many factors. In 1987 the Esperanto community celebrated the 100th anniversary of the initial publication of the language and also recorded the highest attendance at the UK. Other factors, predominantly location, are also highly influential.

Although the correlation between participation and time, a regression between years and UK participation shows a small positive trend (Figure 11). Transforming the participant data to a log scale, increases the correlation coefficient a small amount (from .35 to .44) and shows the trend more clearly (Figure 12). All possible slopes within a 95% confidence interval are positive, indicating that the trend for UK participation has been increasing over time.

UK Participation					
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
1860.506	1061.22	120.937	1126188.648	57.039	77
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum Squared:	# Missing:
163	5946	5783	143259	352124637	0

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of the number of *Universala Kongreso* participants between 1905 and 1992 inclusive (excluding 14 years during World Wars I and II when no UKs were held)..

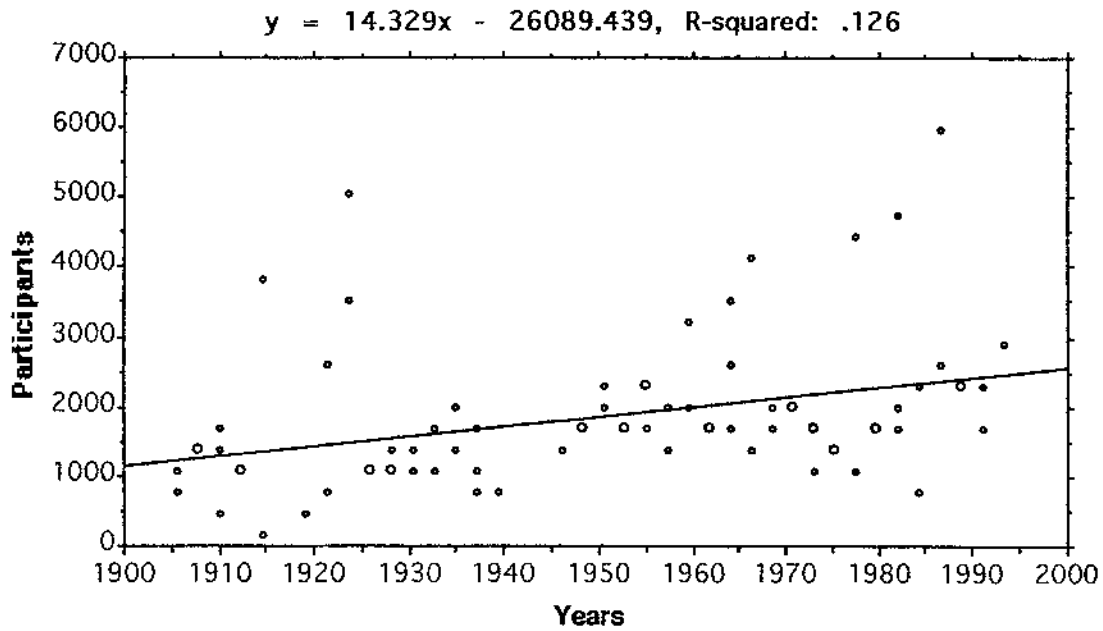


Figure 11. Simple regression of UK years and the number of participants attending.

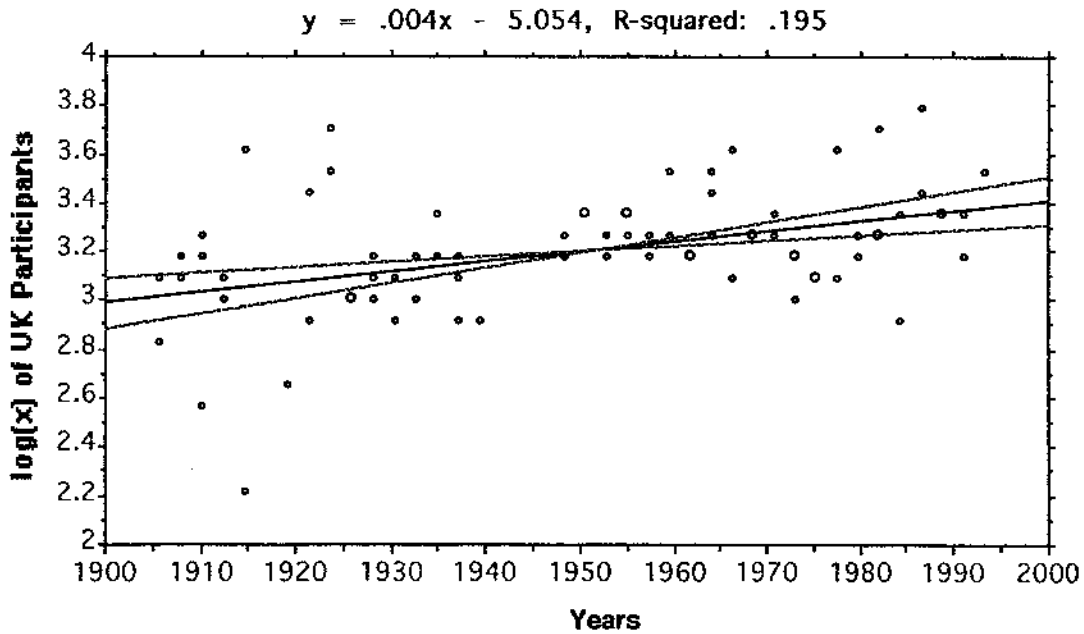


Figure 12. Product-moment correlation of UK years and the log of the number of UK participants.

In 1992 the convention was held in Vienna, Austria. Originally scheduled for Prague, after the collapse of the Eastern Block, there were no longer sufficient funds to host the convention in Czechoslovakia. Poland

contributed the greatest number of participants in 1992, followed by Germany and Japan.

In previous years, travel restrictions from the Eastern Block reduced the number of participants from communist countries. Today, the burden of travel costs is probably the most important consideration. The 1991 UK took place in Bergen, Norway. Many esperantists found the cost simply prohibitive.

Three UKs have been held in the United States, but they have been among the least well attended (only 1 within 1 SD of the mean). In fact the total attendance of all three (1423) is less than the mean (Table 6).

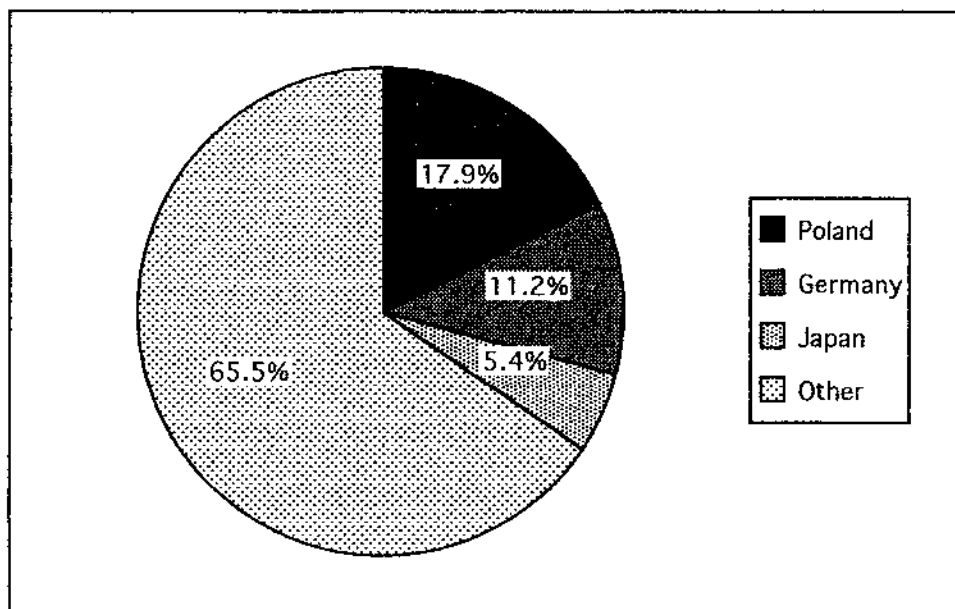


Figure 13. Poland, Germany, and Japan were the countries that contributed the greatest number of participants to the 1992 UK.

Conclusions

This report has been an attempt to show current picture of the distribution of Michigan and United States Esperanto communities. The Esperanto community represents a complex interaction of many factors, including history, culture, and politics. To fully interpret these factors, a

structuralist approach that embraces the fullest range of sociological perspective would be desirable.

The Michigan section, though limited in scope, illustrates current concentrations of the esperantists and their relation to local population. Some results of the Michigan study should be regarded with caution, however, as so few data are available. The U.S. section, which contrasts ELNA membership, UEA membership and U.S. population, is probably the best representation available of the distribution of Esperantists in the United States. Finally, current trends in Esperanto activity, as measured by participation in the *Universalaj Kongresoj*, shows variable, but significant (at the .05 level) increases over time.

The U.S. Esperanto community has been a little studied phenomenon. Both ELNA and UEA have the raw records that could be used to generate a record over time of the growth of the Esperanto community and changes in distribution. Similarly, someone probably has the records of the EANA and earlier U.S. organizations. These data could be analyzed to show movement of the geographic centers of the U.S. and world movements over time.

The world movement has received more interest, but little has been published and nothing in English speaking literature. The movement of many of the important individuals in the formative Esperanto community are still known and a study that compared the activity of these individuals and the creation of local organizations would be of historical interest. An effort should be made soon to bring this information together before the opportunity to gather data on these earlier periods is lost .

The character of this report has been essentially descriptive. Without a solid based of descriptive work, interpretation cannot be successful. The document provides a first step toward a better understanding of the Michigan

and U.S. Esperanto communities and their relationship with the rest of the world.

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About this report

ELNA and UEA Data were originally entered and manipulated with Claris Works. ESM data were imported from the mainframe using Kermit, edited using Microsoft Word, and transferred to Works. Tables and figures were produced on a Macintosh IIfx. Maps were generated using Map-Maker. Statview was used for data analysis and table and graph generation. The final version of this document was produced on a Macintosh Powerbook 100 and printed on an Apple Stylewriter using Microsoft Word 5.0 for word-processing and Aldus Freehand for final map production.